

THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7. VOL. 9.] NEW-YORK, DEC. 1834. [WHOLE No. 103.

SERMON CLXXVIII.

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ZEAL IN RELIGION.

GAL. iv. 18.—*It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.*

The truth of this maxim is readily admitted in every thing but religion. All commend zeal in the affairs of this world, and seem to expect strong excitement wherever great interests are at stake. Who censures a resolute pursuit of wealth or learning, of honor or power? Would you reproach the philanthropist for his zeal in behalf of the suffering, or the patriot for his ardor in defending the liberties of his country? Where life or health, property or reputation is in jeopardy, wakeful solicitude is not only allowed, but demanded. At the death-bed of a friend, amid the perils of an ocean-storm; on the eve of a battle that must decide not merely the fate of an army, but the destinies of a nation or a continent for ages, could any man refrain from deep emotion?

But the maxim of our text is far more applicable to religion. If the interests of time so powerfully excite us, how ought the realities of eternity to rouse, and thrill, and agitate our inmost souls! Surely a concern touching our dearest hopes both for this and the coming world, should awaken the strongest emotions.

Let us then reflect on some of the reasons for such excitement in matters of religion.

I. *Man was MADE to feel deeply.* His very nature requires excitement. He is neither a snail, nor an oyster, but a being whose element is activity, and whose nutriment is emotion. His mind rusts by standing still, and cannot remain long in a state of entire repose. He must and will have excitement of some kind; and if he finds it not in the service of God, he will seek it in the vices or the vanities of this world. Can we hesitate which to choose? Is not the excite-

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ment of a Christian preferable to that of a worldling, the rapture of saints and angels in heaven to the deathless agonies of devils and damned spirits in hell?

II. But look at the *obvious* DESIGN of the gospel. Is there not in its history and its principles abundant evidence of its having been intended to pour through every bosom a tide of strong and exquisite emotions? If God has taken such pains to reveal his will by patriarchs, and prophets and apostles; if he has given up his Son to the death of the cross for our redemption; if he has sent his Spirit to transform us into his own pure and blessed image; if he has appointed his ministers, his Sabbaths, and all the means of grace to impress his word on our minds with saving efficacy; if he has brought before us the most powerful motives that heaven, earth and hell can suggest, and pressed them upon us in a thousand forms; does he design by all this to produce on our sensibilities no deep, no abiding impression? If he intended no excitement, why provide so much fuel for the flame, and then send coals of fire from heaven to kindle it to an intense, an everlasting blaze?

III. Consider, also, THE TENDENCIES OF DIVINE TRUTH; and say whether the gospel is not *adapted* to excite strong emotion. Contemplate the character of God, radiant with glory, and endeared to all holy beings by the displays he has made of himself in the works of his creation, providence and grace. Must not these touch the heart? Can we gaze unmoved on his infinite power and wisdom, on his inflexible justice, on his spotless purity, on all the matchless wonders of his love to fallen man? Will that character whose transcendent loveliness waked the psalmist's lyre, whose awful glories overwhelmed the prophet's soul, before whose overpowering splendors all the seraphim veil their faces, and bow in transports of admiration and praise—can such a character fail, when properly contemplated, to kindle our hearts into high and delightful emotion?

Look at the *atonement* with its cluster of wonders; see mankind so ruined, that no created arm could rescue them from endless woe; behold God so loving the world as to give his only begotten Son for their redemption; see the Lamb of God bleeding on the cross to atone for their sins, and restore them to his full and everlasting favor: is there nothing here to melt the heart? If the very name of a Howard has thrilled the bosom even of those who had never been blest by his philanthropy; if when the father of our country died, the nation wept in grateful sorrow; if his companion in arms, on visiting our shores after the lapse of half a century, was hailed by all with every possible

demonstration of respect and gratitude; can we refrain from emotions far deeper, while contemplating the grace of Him who, being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and consented there to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, and to bear that chastisement by which alone our peace is procured?

In the same way I might glance at all the truths of the gospel; but take only the subject of regeneration, with its kindred and inseparable doctrines. If the Bible represents man as an apostate, as a rebel; as fallen, polluted, ruined; as alienated from God by wicked works, and so utterly dead in sin, that he must be created anew in Christ Jesus, before he can taste the joys of heaven; is it possible for any one to bring such truths as these home to his bosom without being strongly excited? Must they not touch the very main-spring of his soul?

IV. All this excitement, moreover, is *required by the INTERESTS at stake*. What are those interests? Property or reputation, health or life, the friendship of man, the favor of monarchs, thrones and diadems, all the riches, honors or pleasures that this world can give? No; something more than all these—the favor of Him whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell; an immortality of ever-increasing joy or wo; interests high as the throne of Jehovah, deep as the bottomless pit, lasting as eternity; interests, in comparison with which all that can be crowded into the utmost limits of earth and time, dwindle into nothing.

Would you faintly conceive the value of these interests? Ask not the worldling; he has no arithmetic for such calculations. Ask the sinner when wrung with remorse, and trembling in fear of the wrath to come; ask the recent convert while clasping to his bosom those hopes which he would not exchange for the whole world; ask the advanced Christian while sweetly communing with his heavenly Father, and rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory; ask the man whose spirit hovers on the brink of eternity, just ready to plunge into the pit, or to soar on angel-wings to celestial bliss; ask the saints above as they bow before the eternal throne; ask Him who made the soul, and knows its capacities for endless enjoyment or suffering; or Him who came from heaven to the cross for its redemption: then go down to the world of despair, and ask those

whose doom is shadowed forth by the worm that dieth not, and the lake that burneth with quenchless fire: pass down the stream of endless years, and, when myriads after myriads of ages shall have carried you far beyond the utmost point that imagination can now reach, pause there, and ask the sufferers in hell, and the glorified in heaven to tell you, if they can, the value of those interests which are suspended on the gospel.

With such interests at stake can we fail to be excited? Go bid the mother feel not while her first born, her only child is expiring in her arms; bid the fond father and husband feel not as he sees his house and whole family wrapt in flames, and hears their wild shrieks for relief; but tell not him whose immortality is at stake, to smother his feelings on a subject that fills all heaven with deep solicitude? Sooner put your foot on the raging volcano, and bid its fiery bosom cease to heave.

V. But reflect on *the NECESSITY of strong emotion*. Without it the gospel can never accomplish its great design of preparing a fallen race for heaven. Can rebels against God be reclaimed from sin, and transformed into his image, without touching their sensibilities? A sinner regenerated, a Christian sanctified, and united to God, without melting his heart! Can you weld cold iron?

Look at the essential elements of piety. Its seat is in the heart; its very aliment is emotion; and as well might you talk of vision without light, or of fire without heat, as of a Christian without excitement. Examine his spiritual exercises, and see if they are not all exciting. Is there no emotion in that godly sorrow for sin which is unto life? None in that faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world? None in the returning prodigal, none in the humble publican, none in every one of the graces that characterize a new creature in Christ? While attending on the various exercises of devotion, while passing through the conflicts of his spiritual warfare, and going on from one degree of grace to another, till he attains the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, can the Christian be unmoved? As well might you live without breathing. Piety without emotion is utterly irreconcilable.

VI. Look at some prominent *EXAMPLES of true religion*. Here we see its essence bodied forth in visible and living forms. And were they all cold as ice? Did piety, in the days of its greatest purity and power, produce no excitement? Did it touch no chord of deep and exquisite sensibility in the bosom of patriarchs, prophets and apostles? Was the royal penitent unmoved while pouring forth the confessions

and entreaties of the fifty-first Psalm? When smitten to the earth on the plains of Damascus, did Paul feel no emotion? Was there no excitement on the day of Pentecost? None in the bosom of the trembling jailer? None wherever the apostles preached the gospel in demonstration of the Spirit and of power? See the early disciples forsaking father and mother, wife and children, home and country, to go forth, few and feeble, on the mighty enterprise of converting the world to a crucified Savior, braving all the terrors of the dungeon and the stake, setting at defiance the rage of earth and hell leagued against them; and say, can you discover in them no strength of emotion?

If the religion of earth will not satisfy you, examine that of heaven. Inquire of those who have for untold ages bowed before the throne of Jehovah, and rejoiced in his presence, where is fullness of joy. Has there been no excitement in the bosom of those pure and happy spirits? Did the seraphim never kindle into rapture, never burst forth in transports of admiration and praise, never make the lofty arch of heaven ring with their allaluiahs to the Lord God Omnipotent.

If then man was made for excitement; if the gospel was designed, and its truths are adapted to produce the deepest emotion; if the interests at stake so urgently require it; if it is indispensable to the very existence of piety; if the best examples of earth and heaven conspire to illustrate and enforce it; surely we ought to exhibit an ever-burning zeal in matters of religion.

1. Hence we see the propriety of applying divine truth so as to move the whole inner man. Often does it fall on the soul as powerless as moon-beams on a mountain of ice, either because the hearer will not let it come home to himself, or because the preacher does not duly press it on the heart and conscience. He may preach the truth, but does not grapple it to the hearer's mind with hooks of steel. He may discharge arrows drawn from the quiver of the Almighty; but he shoots them so much at random as to hit no one, or wraps so much silk about the point as to penetrate no one's heart or conscience. But did Baxter, did Paul, did the Son of God preach thus?

But you dread the consequences of excitement. What consequences? Anxious inquiries after the way of life, the conversion of sinners, the quickening of Christians in their spiritual course? No; but the bad passions that may spring up under such a plain and pointed exhibition of the truth. But who are to blame for such passions? The preaching of Christ and his apostles was followed everywhere with similar results: but would you blame them instead of their infuriated persecutors? Let every sinner be willing to do his duty by

repentance, and faith, and new obedience, and this conflict between the gospel and human depravity would forever cease.

2. Far be it from me to plead for an improper kind, or an excessive degree of excitement in religion. It should ever be holy, constant, well-regulated. It should spring from intelligent and disciplined piety. It should be lighted only at the altar of God, and be kept alive only by the truths of his word, and the influences of his Spirit. It should be constantly increasing to the end of life. The zeal that is hot to-day, and cold to-morrow, that blazes in a crowd, but dies in solitude, that thinks by the fidelity of a month to earn the privilege of a year's apathy and sloth, is worse than useless. Ours should be, not like the flashes of a fire-fly in a summer evening, or the lurid gleams of lightning at midnight, but like the sun pouring down a ceaseless flood of genial light and heat. I have no sympathy with that sort of zeal which wakes up at the commencement of a revival, and coolly calculates on going to sleep again at its close. I plead only for that which will keep the Christian awake through life, and make his soul, even amid a general declension, like the land of Goshen during the darkness that brooded over all the rest of Egypt.

3. Object not the impossibility of sustaining such a spirit of zeal. I know how exhausting are the excitements of guilt; they create in the bosom a whirlwind that convulses the soul, and shatters its tenement of clay. But is it so with the fervors of holiness? Did the zeal of prophets and apostles derange their minds, or waste their energies? Will the excitement of heaven exhaust the glorified spirits there? Such excitement, so far from enfeebling our minds, jading our spirits, or undermining our health, would continually impart fresh vigor to them all.

4. Reflect, then, on the fatal delusion of those who make their religion to consist simply in cool exercises of the intellect. Could you speak with the tongue of men and of angels; had you the gift of prophecy, and understood all the mysteries of religion; had you the highest degree of knowledge, and a faith sufficient to remove mountains; what would you still be without those warm emotions of love to God and man which the gospel requires? Sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. Hast thou faith? Be it so; but can faith alone save thee? Dost thou believe there is one God? Devils also believe that, and tremble too. Dost thou assent to the entire system of truth revealed in the Bible? So has many a sinner that still went down to his grave impenitent. Hast thou even professed Christ before men? So had they who are represented as pleading before their final Judge,

"We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But he will reply, "I never knew you; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

What then must we think of men whose sensibilities are all asleep on the heart-stirring themes of the gospel? Knowledge, indeed, they may have; that knowledge which puffeth up; philosophy, falsely so called, that starts a thousand foolish questions, and genders an abundance of strife and vain babbling; that pries into mysteries never revealed, displays a wonderful skill in threading the labyrinths of a metaphysical theology, and contends fiercely enough, if not for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet for its own favorite dogmas. But is this religion? If a man thus makes his head a sort of ice-house to keep his heart in a state of perpetual coldness; if his soul can slumber over those truths and glories which fill all heaven with transport; if he can sleep over a world perishing in sin, at the dawn of the millennium, and in view of such motives as drew the Son of God from his throne to a cross—can *he* possess the spirit of apostles, or of the divine Lord and Master?

5. Here we find a full answer to the charge of excessive zeal in religion. Its *quality* may be wrong; but there is no danger of there being too much of the right kind. Is it possible to feel, or sacrifice in this cause more than the gospel requires, or its spirit would prompt; more than our own immortal interests, or those of a perishing world imperiously demand; more than prophets, apostles and martyrs actually did? Who is more fired with holy enthusiasm than Paul was? or more than saints and angels in heaven will forever be?

Beware, then, how you censure a degree of zeal which you do not reach, and cannot fully appreciate in others. Look first to yourself; for a cold heart is a bad judge in such a case. With the spirit of Christ glowing in your bosom, would you censure them? Take care lest you betray your own deficiencies, contravene the whole tenor of the Bible, and reproach some of the best men that ever lived. Measure the intensity of that love which brought the Savior from his Father's bosom to the cross; drink, yourself, a few draughts from that tide of holy, rapturous emotion which will pour through paradise forever; inquire of the martyr as he gazes on the opening visions of eternity, and in his chariot of fire mounts up to glory; ask all the worthies of the church in past ages, all the master-spirits of heaven; and then say, if you can find, even in this excitable age, a degree of zeal equal to the exigencies of the case.

But whence these charges of enthusiasm? From the sincere, devoted follower of Christ, or even from men who would fain extinguish all enthusiasm, or censure that of the student and the poet, the orator and the patriot, or frown on that spirit of enterprise which is hewing down our forests, and constructing our canals and railways, whitening every sea with our sails, and wafting home to our bosoms the riches of every clime? Yes; go to the man who is daily straining all his powers to reach a high point of professional eminence; go to the devotee of pleasure who feeds his jaded sensibilities with novels, theatres and other fashionable amusements; go to the miser who sacrifices himself, soul and body, a whole burnt-offering at the shrine of Mammon; go to a man like the late ravager of Europe, his bosom a volcano of enthusiasm, whose lava desolated a continent; and these are the very men whom you will find, though all ablaze themselves in chase of this world's vanities, yet loudly reprobating enthusiasm in matters of religion.

6. But *genuine* zeal is the grand desideratum of the age. A thousand voices from every quarter of the world, from heaven, and from hell, are calling loudly for a far higher degree of it than the church has ever reached. God enjoins it. The Savior expects it. The gospel deserves it. Motives from three worlds plead for it. Six hundred millions going down to their graves in sin cry aloud for it. All the benevolent enterprises of the day most deeply need it. It is indispensable to sustain revivals of religion, and prepare the way for that revival of a thousand years which shall one day encircle the globe, and send its saving influences into every human family. The angel having the everlasting gospel to preach, is waiting for it. The promises of God in his word, the openings of providence, the dawning glories of the millenium, all most imperiously demand it. Breathe the zeal of prophets and apostles, the spirit of Christ himself, only a small portion of heaven's enthusiasm, into all that bear the Christian name; and how soon would the hosannahs of our whole race blest with the privileges of the gospel, rise to mingle with the anthems above unto Him who hath loved us, and given himself to die for us—unto whom be glory forever. AMEN.

SERMON CLXXIX.

BY. REV. GEORGE C. BECKWITH.

DANGER AND FOLLY OF DELAY.

ACTS XXIV. 25.—*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

HERE is a specimen of human folly. When Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled" under his bold and pungent appeals; but, while conscious of his guilt, fully apprised of his danger, and urged by the strongest motives to instant compliance with the terms of the gospel, he coolly resolved on persisting in sin, and postponing repentance to such a time as he should himself deem convenient.

Impenitent sinner! do you not see in this example an image of yourself? Reflect. Do you purpose *never* to repent? Do you really mean to die in your sins? No; you expect one day to accept that gospel which you have heard and slighted so long. Against this delusive expectation, so fatal to thousands and millions, we have often warned you; but you heed not our warnings, because you fondly hope to find a season for repentance more convenient than the present.

No matter what excuses you plead for this delay. I shall not stop now to examine them, or even to inquire why you put off this grand business of life, and leave your immortal interests afloat on the uncertainties of a future season. I wish to learn how you contrive, while living in sin, to cherish the hope of ever preparing for heaven. If

unwilling to repent now, what reason have you to expect that you will EVER repent?

1. *The state of mind which leads you to hope for a more convenient season, is the main obstacle to your salvation.* It is the nucleus of all your sins; the sheet-anchor that holds you in rebellion against God; and, till you renounce it, he must look upon you as a determined rebel. You may imagine, that your purpose to repent some time or other is a virtual compliance in prospect with his demands; but what does he require of you? To repent next week, next year, in old age, in sickness, on the bed of death, just when it may chance to suit your convenience or your wishes? No; God insists on immediate repentance; and your delay is direct disobedience to his plain and oft-repeated commands. Your purpose to repent, not now, but at some future day, is the very point which he requires you to abandon; and if you entrench yourself in this purpose, you take the readiest way to seal your everlasting ruin. If unwilling to repent now, you are in fact unwilling to repent at all; nor would you, with your present disposition, repent in old age, in sickness, amid all the agonies of death, amid the brightest glories of heaven, or the deepest horrors of hell!

2. *But delay will only aggravate this state of mind.* It is increasing your reluctance to repent. Repetition confirms all our habits. So with the voluptuary, so with the miser, so with the devotee of ambition, so with every class of transgressors; and you need not trace their progress far, to discover that sinful habits grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Is the delaying sinner exempted from this law of our nature? Can he continue impenitent without increasing his reluctance to repent? Is not every day, every hour, bringing him nearer and nearer to a degree of obstinacy that will prove fatal to his soul?

3. *Meanwhile the external obstacles to repentance are multiplying.* The world, the flesh and the devil are daily augmenting their power over the heart, and twining around the sinner cords more and more

difficult to be broken. Business, cares, pleasures, temptations of every sort are thickening along his path.

Delaying youth! if you cannot surmount the obstacles which now obstruct your return to God; if you cannot now deny your sinful appetites and passions; if you cannot now break from your irreligious associates, and stem the tide of influences adverse to your immediate conversion, when will you? Are not these and similar obstacles continually increasing? While the world is thus gaining every day a stronger hold on your heart, do you expect ere long to break away from her enchantments?

Will the pleasures of youth soon pass away? Very true; but they will be followed by cares still more urgent and absorbing. Most of you are already too intent on worldly schemes to think much, if at all, of your souls. Engaged on your farm, in your shop, your study, or your counting-room, you find no time, you feel no disposition to repent. Will continuance in such a course prepare you for repentance? Ask the student long devoted to his books, or the miser grown gray in search of wealth, or the devotee of ambition still eager in the chase of honor and power. Do you find them more disposed than formerly to accept the overtures of redeeming love?

4. But delay will render the work of repentance more difficult, by *increasing your guilt, and confirming your habits of sin.* Your transgressions are more numerous now than they were one week ago; and every day, every hour, every moment is adding to their number and aggravation. Your habits of impenitence may eventually become inveterate. Sinful habit is often well nigh invincible. It is not a mushroom that springs up in the night, and may be cut down at a blow in the morning, but a sturdy oak winding its roots around the rocks, lifting its head above the clouds, and there bidding defiance to the peltings of the storm, to the fury of the tempest, to the hottest and heaviest thunderbolts of heaven.

If you know the power of habit, would you think to overcome it

by continued indulgence? Would you attempt to reclaim the drunkard by allowing a still freer use of ardent spirits? But no better reason have you to suppose, that continuance in sin will prepare you to repent. When you shall have wasted the morn of your days and the vigor of your powers amid the vanities of earth; when age shall have marred your enjoyments, your passions become torpid, and there shall be no more treasure to gain, or honors to win, do you hope to find in the vale of life both a season more convenient, and the work of repentance more easy? Fatal hope! it has ruined millions, more perhaps than all other excuses put together.

But you sincerely intend to repent. Alas! so did many a sufferer now in hell; and this very purpose just lulled him to sleep, and kept him asleep till he woke in perdition. If unwilling to repent now, quiet not your fears with the hope of repenting at some future day. That day may never come; and if it should, it would probably find your reluctance to repent strengthened almost into obstinacy, all the obstacles to your conversion increased, your iniquities multiplied, your habits of sin fearfully confirmed, and the work of repentance thus rendered so difficult as to be well-nigh hopeless.

5. All this time, *the only means of conversion are losing their power over you.* Know you not what means God has provided for this purpose? The light of nature, the dictates of reason, the whispers of conscience, the instructions of the Bible, the services of the sanctuary, all the privileges of the Sabbath, the warnings of Providence, the example and admonitions of pious friends, the various channels through which divine truth reaches the understanding, the conscience, and the heart; all these are means of grace designed to promote your repentance and salvation.

Now, is not delay continually diminishing the effect of these means upon you? Do they now affect you as deeply as they once did? How long then before you will utterly destroy their power

over you? When will you feel their transforming influence? After continued resistance shall have hardened your heart into adamant? In old age? In sickness? On the bed of death? That is indeed an honest hour, full of terror to an impenitent soul; it makes even the infidel turn pale; it sent dismay to the heart of Hume and Voltaire; it wrung tears from the eye of Paine himself; it will probably recall *your* sins, and set before you the dread realities of eternity; but will it prepare you for heaven? A death-bed hope, in nine cases out of ten, is a fatal delusion!

All the motives of the gospel, too, are losing their influence over you. These come thronging upon you from three worlds. When reading your Bible, or musing in solitude on the things that belong to your everlasting peace, or listening to the pungent appeals of some faithful preacher, or passing through the scenes of a powerful revival, or bending over the death-pillow or the fresh grave of one dearest to your heart, or stretched, to all appearance, upon your own dying bed—did you never at such times feel the motives of the gospel pressing you to an immediate acceptance of its offers?

You will not deny it; but have you not withstood all these motives till they have ceased to affect you? Can you not now stand unmoved in view of death and judgment, of heaven and hell? Gladly would I urge some new motives to arouse or melt you; but whither can I go for stronger than those you have so often resisted? Heaven, earth, hell, all have been tried; the universe can furnish no more.

And do you *expect* any more means or motives? Are you waiting for another Bible, for another Savior, for another God, for new terms of salvation, for stronger motives to repentance? Will God reveal a heaven of more surpassing glory to allure you, or a hell of deeper horrors to alarm you? What then is to reach your heart? What can bring you to repentance? Will your vows so often broken, your conscience so long stifled, all the means of grace continually abused,

all the motives of three worlds thus far resisted—will these, so powerless hitherto, will these hereafter soften your heart into penitence?

I know you hope for heaven; but whence that hope? From the word of God? Encouragement enough does it give to the believer, but not a solitary promise to the delaying sinner. Gladly would I speak some peace to your soul; but how can I cry, Peace, peace, when God hath said, There is no peace to the wicked? Gladly would I promise you a more convenient season for repentance; but did Felix find such a season? Did Esau? Will you? Alas! the Bible assures you, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," and solemnly forewarns you, "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Which leads me to observe,

6. By delay you may grieve the *Holy Spirit to depart from you*. He will not always strive with the delaying sinner; and you may provoke God to withdraw his influences entirely, and leave you to take your chosen course. Then may you embrace such errors—there *are* such errors—as will ruin your soul. You may even deny the existence of God, and spurn all his offers of mercy, and laugh at his direst threatenings, and shut your eyes against all the realities of a future state, and sin without remorse or fear, and lull your conscience into slumbers so deep, so deathlike, that eternity alone can break them.

Is all this fiction? No; I have been describing the actual history of a man who once became almost a Christian. The Spirit of God strove with him powerfully; he was deeply convicted of sin; his conscience smote him till he thought its stings too terrible to be borne; and in a paroxysm of anguish, in a delirium of agony, he prayed the Spirit to depart, and leave his troubled bosom at rest. That prayer was heard; and when he rose from his knees, the Spirit had fled forever, conscience ceased to sting, and the man went:

down to death, apparently with no remorse for the past and with scarce a fear for the future.

But you hope to recall the aggrieved Spirit of God, whenever you please! So thought this very man, and so hoped a youth who in time of a revival appeased his conscience and fears by resolving to repent at a future time. He went so far as even to write his resolution, and fix the time. That time began to draw near, but disease came a little before it, and death stared him in the face. Now he thought of his resolution, read it with solemn interest, bathed it in tears, longed for the feelings he once had, and prayed for the Spirit to return; but the insulted Spirit came not at his call, and that youth died in utter despair!

Delaying sinner! are you not taking the same course? Should you come to such a death-bed, you may call in vain for the Spirit so often grieved. You may call too late. The Spirit may have taken his everlasting flight; and the Savior himself may then say, "Because I called and ye refused, and set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, therefore will I laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind."

7. Let all these considerations be riveted more deeply on your mind by *the shortness and uncertainty of life*. Your life is at best but "a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Hold your breath twenty minutes, and your soul is in hell! Your whole eternity is suspended on the thread which any one of a thousand accidents may cut in a moment, and let you sink into the abyss!

Can you still be at ease? Can you swing securely over eternal burnings? Can you—*will* you—**DARE** you cling to the hope of a more convenient season? Has God promised such a season? You *hope* for it! So have millions, and perished by the delusion. You hope to live! So do many on the bed of death. Are you young and

vigorous? Be it so; but may not death still be aiming at your vitals? Do you purpose to repent next year, next month, next week, or even to-morrow? This very night you may be in eternity; and of what use will be your purpose to repent, when you may be lifting up your eyes in torment?

Will you then stake your immortal interests on a delusion so fatal as the hope of a more convenient season? Shall no considerations arrest you? Will you still sleep in sin, on the brink of hell? While God is warning you, and the Savior inviting you, and the Spirit perhaps moving on your heart, and angels waiting to rejoice at your repentance, and dangers thickening around you, will you still persist in rebellion, and harden your heart against every motive to repentance? Will you, can you shut your ears against the wailings of the pit, the songs of heaven, and the sweet voice of redeeming love? *"If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."*